

ST CLEMENT'S SANDWICH



CHURCH AT HOME
SUNDAY
13th SEPTEMBER 2020
The Fourteenth Sunday
after Trinity

Great is his mercy upon those who fear him

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving of ourselves that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Pray today's Collect:

Almighty God, whose only Son has opened for us a new and living way into your presence: give us pure hearts and steadfast wills to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Recite today's PSALM: 103:8-13

⁸The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness.

⁹He will not always accuse us, nor will he keep his anger for ever.

¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.

¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far has he set our sins from us.

¹³As a father cares for his children, so does the Lord care for those who fear him.

From today's EPISTLE : Romans 14:7-12

⁷We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.'

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Today's GOSPEL Reading: St Matthew 18:21-35

²¹Peter came and said to Jesus, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²²Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him

to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." ²⁹Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord Praise to you O Christ

THE RECTOR WRITES

We know that we can't live in this world very long without being hurt. I think that's true, without exception. We've all been, or felt we've been, wronged at some time or another. People speak, and that is no doubt a very good thing, much more freely now than people used to, about how they've been wounded, mistreated, abused or victimised. You may be carrying the weight, perhaps still after many years, of a wrong that was done to you. If that is so, today's message is going to be hard to hear, because, as someone has put it, it requires 'spiritual surgery'. Surgery is never pleasant, but the good news is that God wants to remove what's toxic in our lives, so that we live our lives with love and joy. It's called forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the central thread running boldly through this Sunday's readings. Paul, writing to the Romans, implores his hearers not to judge others, and in today's passage from Matthew's Gospel, Peter asks if he should forgive someone who has wronged him as many as seven times. Jesus says 'Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy seven times'. In the Bible seven is symbolic of completeness or totality, and seventy seven represents complete and utter totality. If someone wrongs us we are asked to completely forgive them. To emphasise this Jesus tells a story in which a king orders a slave and his family to be sold for nonpayment of an almost impossibly enormous debt. When the slave begs for more time to pay, the king takes pity on him and forgives him the entire

debt. However, the slave does not do the same when he is owed the equivalent of a couple of month's wages. He uses violence and throws his debtor into prison. When the king is told what has happened, he is angry and punishes the unmerciful slave, just as he punishes the one who owed him money.

The message is the same as the Lord's Prayer, one translation of which, as we know, says 'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'. After teaching his disciples the Lord's Prayer, Jesus elaborates on it saying 'For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'. It underlines that forgiveness is, or should be, a never ending circle. We forgive others because God forgives us, and because we forgive others, God forgives us.

When we see a bereaved family member in a court looking across to the person who has just been convicted of killing their son or daughter and saying 'I forgive you', or when we see a former prisoner of war shaking the hand of their captor, it seems that they are doing the impossible. That may be just too much for us, but it may be that their forgiveness has had to become the way of their life because they have realised that failure to forgive can be a form of self-torture that is ultimately more damaging to those who harbour the pain of revenge and permanent bitterness than for those with whom they are angry.

We learn about forgiveness at a very early age, being taught to say 'I'm sorry. It's OK, I forgive you.' when something happens that hurts us. Life can hurt, for some of us it can feel that it hurts often, not just in general, but in specific, tangible ways that cause us real harm continually, mentally and even physically. When we are hurt, or when someone we love is injured, forgiveness is often the farthest thing from our first response.

Our Gospel says that forgiveness must be an absolute. No wonder we have such a hard time doing it! Jesus indicates that forgiveness is about ongoing discipleship. It must become a way of life. Forgiveness is not just 'getting over it'. It's not pretending that some wrong did not occur or forgetting that it happened. Rather it is declaring that an offence will no longer define our life. Forgiveness proclaims that what will define us is mercy and love, and there is mercy and love at the heart of God.

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We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life. The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

Let us Pray - In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father –

- Giving thanks to God for his mercy shown to all who call upon him in faith
- For the church, that it may be courageous to face the hard demands of the Gospel and for repentance among its members and the joy of knowing the forgiveness of sins
- For those who suffer for their faith, for the Church here, our St Clement's family
- For peace in the troubled places, where war and violence destroy human life and the beauty of God's creation
- For the victims of war and injustice. For refugees and asylum seekers
- Giving thanks for those who fought in the Battle of Britain 80 years ago
- For ourselves, for each other, families, friends and neighbours, giving thanks for our special relationships
- For our community, schools and businesses
- For our nation, Government, scientists and all decision makers
- For safety and our carefulness as restrictions are reimposed on our common life
- For health and care workers. As it closes giving thanks for Wayfarers Care Home
- For the sick with Covid 19, all who face illness, especially terminal illness, and for all who care for them and those who love them
- For the lonely, isolated, those afraid and those who mourn
- For the souls of the departed, that through the mercy of Christ they may have rest and peace
- In the spirit of forgiving, as we trust to be forgiven, we offer these our prayers

Our Father ...

Heavenly Father, you have taught us by your Son that if we do not forgive others we cannot receive your forgiveness: make us merciful in our dealings with those who do us wrong, as we recall how mercifully you have dealt with us; that forgiven much, we may forgive much, for the sake of him who died that we might be forgiven, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Blessing The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you now and always **Amen**

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NEXT SUNDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 10.30am EUCHARIST
St Clement's will continue to be open
for individual private prayer, Monday
to Friday between 12 noon and 4pm,
and between 10am and 4pm on Saturdays.

